



Little Hans's Little Sister

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In an important sense, Freud's metapsychology is built on the back of animal phobias, which he repeatedly trots out whenever he needs to substantiate his theories of the castration complex, anxiety, and even the foundational Oedipal complex.[1] From a feminist perspective, it is fascinating that behind the animal phobias that define Freud's work—Little Hans's horse, the Rat Man, the Wolf Man—there are consistently fantasies of matricide, self-birth, and womb envy. Perhaps more significantly, there are sisters who both torment and titillate their brothers and thereby contribute to the onset of their phobias. Freud relegates to the background these terrible sisters and their abjected mothers to put the father at the center of animal phobia. In this essay, I will explore the mothers and sisters effaced by the father-animal and the ways in which they "bite back" in Freud's own analysis of animal phobias.

Eat or Be Eaten

In the major cases of animal phobia that Freud analyzes and repeatedly invokes throughout his writings, from the "Analysis of Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy" (1909a) on, he identifies the threat posed by the animal with the father's castration threats; the boy-child's fear of being bitten by the animal in question is interpreted as a fear of castration. For example, in his analysis of Little Hans (the Five Year-Old Boy), Hans is afraid that a horse will bite him. Freud interprets his horse phobia as the substitution of the horse for his father, from whom he fears castration as punishment for his desires for his mother. Hans has ambivalent feelings toward his father, whom he both loves and fears, and "solves" the problem by splitting his father into the good father and the



bad father, the latter represented by the horse. The Rat Man and the Wolf Man both get their names from the animals that they fear will bite or devour them.

The Rat Man is named for his famous story of an "Eastern" punishment whereby rats used their teeth to bore into the anus of the victim (Freud 1909b, 166). It doesn't take long for Freud to discover that one of the imagined victims of this punishment is the patient's father. The rest of the analysis turns around the patient's relationship with his father, his father's disapproval of his sexual relations, and the patient's imagined punishment associated with sex. The Rat Man's phobic fantasies involve being devoured by rats, or his father being devoured by rats as a sort of punishment levied for his father's cruelty and the patient's own sexual indiscretions. Later in his analysis, Freud links the rat phobia to anal eroticism associated with the patient's childhood being plagued by worms. The rats come to represent many things, including money, disease, the penis, and children. The association between rats and children involves, among other things, the fact that as a child, the patient liked to bite people.

The Wolf Man is also afraid of being devoured by animals. Although the fear of being devoured or bitten by wolves is central to Freud's analysis, the patient reports other animal phobias—butterflies, caterpillars, swine—some involving similar fears. In the case of the Wolf Man, Freud interprets the dreaded wolf as a father substitute that threatens to devour the patient as he had seen a wolf devour seven little goats in a fairy-tale book that his sister used to torment him with as a child: "Whenever he caught sight of this picture [of a wolf] he began to scream like a lunatic that he was afraid of the wolf coming and eating him up. His sister, however, always succeeded in arranging so that he was obliged to see this picture, and was delighted at his terror" (Freud 1918, 16). Freud surmised that in the cases of the Wolf Man and of Little Hans, their fathers used to pretend to want to gobble them up (Freud 1925, 104). He likens this to another case of a young American whose father read him stories about

> an Arab chief who pursued a "ginger-bread man" so as to eat him up. He [the patient] identified himself with this edible person, and the Arab chief was easily recognized as a father-substitute . . . The idea of being devoured by the father is typical age-old childhood material. It has familiar parallels in mythology (e.g. the myth of Kronos) and in the animal kingdom. (Freud 1925, 105)

Freud's allusion to the animal kingdom suggests that children see animals eating each other and become afraid that they too might be eaten by an animal. Freud suggests that children's tendency to bite each other is one of the bodily impulses they share with animals. This equality between children and animals makes them cannibals of sorts, at least in their imaginaries. They eat their



own kind and easily become afraid of being eaten by them in turn. In a certain sense, all fear is linked to the fear of being eaten, the fear of becoming the eaten rather than the eater, becoming passive rather than active.

The opposition between eating and being eaten operates throughout Freud's metapsychology under the guise of the opposition between activity and passivity. As we know, for Freud, activity is associated with masculinity while passivity is associated with femininity. In the case of the animal phobias and the fear of being devoured by the father, Freud sees a hidden wish; namely, the desire to be in the feminine or passive position in relation to the father in a sexual way. Extrapolating from the cases of Little Hans and the Wolf Man, in his later work on anxiety, Freud concludes "it shows that the idea of being devoured by the father gives expression, in a form that has undergone regressive degradation, to a passive, tender impulse to be loved by him in a genital-erotic sense" (Freud 1925, 105). In his earlier analysis of the Wolf Man case, he argues that the patient witnessed animal coitus, either performed by his parents having sex "doggie" style or nearby sheepdogs having sex.[2] A central factor in Freud's supposition is that the patient must have seen his mother's genitals (or some version of female genitals) and his father's (or the animal's) "violent" movements in relation to them. The young patient saw this scene as both threatening and exciting. (As we know from Freud's writings on fetishism and elsewhere, the "castrated" female genitals make the threat of castration seem real.) According to Freud, the Wolf dream suggests that the patient wanted to submit to his father's violence/passion in the way that his mother had. In other words, he wanted to adopt the passive position in relation to his father. Freud makes explicit the connection between the wolf phobia, the fear of being eaten, and the passive position of the mother in relation to the father:

> His relation to his father might have been expected to proceed from the sexual aim of being beaten by him to the next aim, namely, that of being copulated with by him like a woman; but in fact, owing to the opposition of his narcissistic masculinity, this relation was thrown back to an even more primitive stage. It was displaced on to a father-surrogate, and at the same time split off in the shape of a fear of being eaten by the wolf. (Freud 1918, 64)

The Wolf Man had adopted a passive feminine position in relation to his father by splitting his father into the figure of the wolf, which he feared would eat him. Yet, at some level, he wanted to be eaten by his father and thereby adopt the passive feminine position in relation to him.

Throughout his discussion of animal phobias, Freud's analysis suggests a strong association between cannibalism and sex, an association that he does not explore.[3] In his discussions of Little Hans, the Rat Man, and the Wolf Man, there is a fear of being eaten or devoured that accompanies sexual desire.



In the case of Little Hans, the patient is afraid of being bitten by the horse/father as punishment for his desire for his mother. In the case of the Rat Man, the patient fantasizes rats/himself eating his father and identifies with biting rats. In the case of the Wolf Man, the patient is afraid of being devoured by wolves, which he also identifies with his father; but at the same time, he associates the wolves with sex and a desire for his father. In each of these cases, biting or being bitten, eating or being eaten, is linked to repressed sexual desires. Freud specifically identifies the fear of being bitten with a castration threat, suggesting that the fear is one of cannibalism by the father, who, like Kronos, threatens to eat his young. The association between cannibalism and sex in the animal phobias suggests an alternative primal scene in which the young patient—the Wolf Man in particular—may have seen or imagined his parents' sex act as an act of cannibalism. The mother's "castration" could be imagined to be the result of the father's cannibalism, which is in keeping with the link between the father and biting, gnawing, or devouring animals. The boy's ambivalence comes from fearing yet desiring "castration" from his father, who threatens to bite or eat his penis. In an important sense, then, it is the fantasy of cannibalism or the dog-eat-dog world of animals—children don't draw a line between humans and animals—that gives the castration threat its teeth. Discussing the relationship between aggressive instincts (e.g., the boy's Oedipal hatred toward his father) and sexual instincts (e.g., the boy's Oedipal desire for his mother), Freud says: "It is like a prolongation in the mental sphere of the dilemma of 'eat or be eaten' which dominates the organic animate world. Luckily the aggressive instincts are never alone but always alloyed with the erotic ones" (Freud 1932, 111). This passage suggests that "eat or be eaten" applies to both aggressive and sexual instincts; and furthermore, that the two are essentially linked by virtue of the formula "eat or be eaten." The animal phobias with little boys both fearing and desiring to eat and be eaten, as they have seen animals (and perhaps their parents) doing, makes this clear. The mental world, like the physical world, is a doggie-eat-doggie world.

She's Some Kind of Animal!

At this point, it seems that there is a tension between the active and passive roles of father and mother in Freud's account of the animal phobias and his account of totemism. If in the animal phobias the mother is in the position of being eaten, so to speak, and the father is in the position of eating, then how does that jibe with Freud's story of the primal horde of brothers eating their father? In *Totem and Taboo*, the father is put in the position of the eaten (the passive feminine position) while the son is in the active masculine position of eating. Of course, in both totemism and animal phobia, the animal takes the place of the father, or vice versa. Although the mother remains closely



associated with the animal (both in the Wolf Man's primal scene as Freud imagines it and throughout Freud's writings on the mother), it is the father who is substituted with a specific animal—horse, rat, wolf. As we learn in *Totem and Taboo*, this primal substitution of an animal for the father is the inauguration of society and representation, while the mother is no more than a possession of the father, and then subsequently of the brothers. In the case of the father, then, the substitution is made explicit, and therefore a sign of civilization (or we might say the difference between the savage and the neurotic); but in the case of the mother, the identification with animality remains implicit, unsublimated, and beyond either representation or the social.[4] Within the terms of *Totem and Taboo*, the father-animal substitution is the result of the activity of the brothers and not of the mothers or sisters, even though Freud speculates that it has its origins in the "sick fancies" of pregnant women who imagine they were impregnated by animals—a fantasy in which the father/brother plays no part at all (Freud 1913, 118). The seemingly contradictory role of women/animals is particularly interesting in that what is uncanny about the animal phobias seems to be the reactivation of the passive position rather than the activity itself.

Freud's analysis of the uncanny will help elucidate the connection between the uncanny and the reactivation of the passive or feminine position (and its link to the reactivation of the animal). In his essay on the uncanny, Freud discusses the uncanny effect of E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman" as revolving around a fear of castration. In the story, a student named Nathaniel has a fear of having his eyes ripped out by the "Sandman," a figure with whom his childhood nurse threatened him if he didn't go to bed. According to the nurse, this wicked man throws sand into naughty children's eyes so that the eyes jump out of their heads and he can carry the eyes back to his own children, where "they sit up there in their nest, and their beaks are hooked like owls' beaks, and they use them to peck up naughty boys' and girls' eyes with" (Freud 1919, 228). Although Nathaniel's phobia is not explicitly identified as an animal phobia, there is an obvious connection to the fear of birds pecking out his eyes. Later we learn of Nathaniel's terror at finding out that Olympia, the "girl" whom he sees through his window, is actually an automaton with empty eye sockets, which are about to be filled with real human eyes. Seeing Olympia's missing eyes (like seeing the "castrated" female sex) has an uncanny effect on Nathaniel, who realizes that his love object is literally an object. Freud suggests that what is truly uncanny about Olympia is the reactivation of passivity—that a passive or dead object appears alive. Witnessing the return to life of the lifeless doll is terrifying and yet compelling. Freud interprets the effect of this reactivation of the passive feminine as reactivating Nathaniel's passive feminine attitude toward his father: "This automatic doll can be nothing else than a materialization of Nathaniel's feminine attitude towards his father in his infancy" (Freud 1919, 232). An uncanny sensation is produced when something





that should be passive becomes active or something domesticated becomes wild, whether that something is a girl or an animal.

It is telling that in the etymology of the German word *Heimlich* (which means "home" or the opposite of *Unheimlich*, "uncanny") with which Freud begins his essay on the uncanny, we learn that *Heimlich* also denotes "tame," as in tame animals versus wild animals (Freud 1919, 222). The appearance of a wild animal in the midst of domestic ones can produce an uncanny effect, particularly if the animal in question is a tame or domestic animal turned wild, a passive animal become active (like Little Hans's horse, for example). The same holds true for girls and women: They are expected to be passive, and when they are not, their unexpected activity produces an uncanny effect. We are surprised when domestic girls or animals go wild and bite back. For the male child, according to Freud, the threat of biting is always directed at the penis and brings with it the castration complex. Interestingly, he describes the function of the castration complex as inhibiting and limiting masculinity and encouraging femininity (see Freud 1925; cf. Freud 1915, 134). Earlier, in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," Freud has described how the drives can pass from active to passive, both in terms of their aims and their objects—loving becomes being loved, biting becomes being bitten, eating becomes being eaten. It is as if the subject's own activity is projected outward and now, rather than assume an active position in relation to the world, the subject assumes a passive position. The castration complex, which Freud often associates with the fear of being bitten or devoured, encourages passivity or the feminine position. The subject's assumption of the passive feminine position correlates with imagining another in the position of the active masculine position, as if the threats of punishment or feelings of ambivalence lead the subject to imagine his own urges to bite or to eat turning on him from the outside. Given that the infant's first relationship with eating comes through the maternal breast or mother's milk, we might wonder why the fantasies of being bitten, eaten, or devoured (which Freud interprets as castration threats) don't come from the mother.

Fear of Being Devoured (by the Mother)

Contra Freud, Julia Kristeva makes this argument. She maintains that fear hides an aggression, which at the earliest stages is an oral aggression related to both food and speech, and both revolve around the mother: "From the deprivation felt by the child because of the mother's absence to the paternal prohibitions that institute symbolism, that relation [the symbolic language relation] accompanies, forms, and elaborates the aggressivity of drives . . . want and aggressivity are chronologically separable but logically coextensive" (Kristeva 1980, 39). The child feels aggression in response to its fear of both the loss of maternal satisfaction and paternal prohibition. While Freud identifies this aggressivity



as one directed at the father through its substitute, the phobic animal, Kristeva sees a pre-objectal aggression that comes from a bodily driven force and latches onto the animal as a symbol for everything threatening and scary in the child's young life. Kristeva writes, "Fear and the aggressivity intended to protect me from some not yet localizable cause are projected and come back to me from the outside: 'I am threatened'" (Kristeva 1980, 39). She argues that the child responds to both deprivation and prohibition with aggressive impulses, which in the case of the maternal body may literally include the urge to bite or devour, to incorporate the maternal body to hold on to it (cf. Kristeva 1980, 39). The child's own aggressivity, then, is projected onto something outside itself, an animal, as a shield not only against the deprivation and prohibition exercised toward it by its parents but also against its own violent impulses. At this stage, these impulses revolve around incorporation as an attempt to devour and thereby possess the parental love (not-yet) object. And, as Freud also argued, the phobic animal symbol becomes a way for the child to negotiate its ambivalent feelings toward its parents.





At the same time that the child is learning language and incorporating the words of its parents, it is trying to incorporate them. For the infant, the mouth is the first center of bodily cathexis associated with pleasure, deprivation, and language acquisition. Words, like breast milk and other food, pass through its mouth. Kristeva interprets the phobic's fantasies of being bitten, eaten, or devoured by a scary animal as a projection of its own aggressive drives, particularly the urge to bite, eat, or devour the maternal body. Along with Melanie Klein, we might imagine that the infant's earliest desires to bite, eat, or devour are in relation to the mother rather than the father, and, that, furthermore, ambivalence is originally directed toward her. In Kleinian terminology, the mother's breast is split into the good breast and the bad breast. The bad breast, like Freud's uncanny reactivation of feminine passivity, threatens to turn on the infant and bite or devour it: the maternal breast bites back. Kristeva extends this Kleinian thesis with her theory of the abject mother, who appears as both fascinating and threatening to her child.[5] The child's own active aggressive impulses are projected onto the devouring creature—animal or mother—who threaten it from the outside rather than from inside. The phobic creature acts as a defense of sorts, since we can run away from threats from outside (horses, wolves, dogs) but we cannot run away from threats from inside (namely ambivalence). As Freud also points out, this reactivation of the outside threat serves to pacify the child, who can adopt a subject position (albeit passive) in relation to an object (albeit condensed and threatening). Kristeva describes the process:

> In parallel fashion to the setting up of the signifying function, phobia, which also functions under the aegis of censorship and representation, *displaces* by





> *inverting* the sign (the active becomes passive) before *metaphorizing*. Only after such an inversion can the "horse" or the "dog" become the metaphor of my empty and incorporating mouth, which watches me, threatening from the outside. (Kristeva 1980, 39–40)

The biting and devouring mouth of the child is projected onto the biting and devouring mouth of the animal; the child becomes passive—no longer the agent of aggression—while the animal (mother) becomes active—now the agent of aggression.

For Kristeva, phobia represents the failure of introjection of what is incorporated through the mouth, both maternal breast and paternal words (Kristeva 1980, 40). The precocious child does not yet have the linguistic or symbolic competence to displace the thing properly by substituting words, so it displaces by inverting its own impulses onto a telegraphic symbol like the phobic animal. This child may have a facility with, and fascination for, words, but its logorrhea does not effectively stop up the empty mouth deprived of the maternal breast. Unlike Freud, who understands both the totem animal and the phobic animal as substitutes that represent the father, Kristeva argues that the phobic animal does not represent but merely stands in for the feared object or fear itself. She maintains that lurking behind the relation between the father and the animal is the maternal body and all the sensations associated with separation from it, which is to say all the sensations associated with becoming a subject over and against the world and others as objects. For Freud, totem and phobic animals are the harbingers of language and the psychic process of displacement that allows words to compensate for, if not completely replace, things. For Kristeva, however, not yet counter-phobic, language or words are not up to the task of counterbalancing the abject mother; words are not adequate substitutes for things, particularly what she calls "the maternal thing" (Kristeva 1987). Therefore, the child finds another thing (the horse or wolf) to stand in for so many things that it cannot represent in words: its wants, the desires of its parents, the sounds, sights, smells, and textures of its world. In this sense, for Kristeva, phobia is not so much a displacement as a condensation. Since, ultimately, we are all in the position of the phobic, unable to find the right words to adequately capture our experience or compensate for the nostalgic longing for (imagined) unity with the world and others, we continue to speak, to write, to search for words with which to describe what remains unnamable. In this context, Kristeva says, "phobia literally stages the instability of object relation" (Kristeva 1980, 43). Phobia shows us how and why the subject-object split is a precarious fantasy, necessary and yet illusory. As much as we try, the thing cannot be completely incorporated and thereby possessed through language; and at the same time, as much as we try, the thing cannot be completely expelled or abjected because it always returns. Yet, words can





act as go-betweens or messengers between fragile, always precarious, porous not-yet or not-quite subjects and fragile, always precarious, porous not-yet or not-quite objects.

Little Hans's Horse as Hieroglyph

In the case of Little Hans, Kristeva maintains that the animal—a horse—stands in for a general fear that cannot be reduced to fear of castration:

> The phobia of horses becomes a hieroglyph that condenses all fears, from unnamable to namable. From archaic fears to those that accompany language learning, at the same time as familiarization with the body, the street, animals, people. The statement "to be afraid of horses" is a hieroglyph having the logic of metaphor and hallucination. By means of the signifier of the phobic object, the "horse," it calls attention to the drive economy in want of an object—that conglomerate of fear, deprivation, and nameless frustration, which, properly speaking, belongs to the unnamable. (Kristeva 1980, 33)[6]



On this account, the phobic object stands in for nameless and general fears associated with the infant's first sense of wanting, its first sense of its own separation from the world and from others, and its first recognition of objects. In other words, the phobic object represents the bodily drives themselves and the infant's frustrated and frustrating attempts to master them through language. Kristeva remarks that Little Hans has "stupendous verbal skill." Yet he is so "eager to name everything that he runs into the unnamable" and is left with the impression of meaningful experiences for which he has no language; or, in Kristeva's terminology, he has sense without significance (Kristeva 1980, 34). It is in this sense that she describes the horse as hieroglyph: It is a living symbol of what is most pressing to Hans, but also what he cannot name. Contra Freud, for Kristeva, the horse is neither a substitute for the father nor a symbol of the boy's fear of castration (although castration fear can evolve out of more primordial feelings of want).[7] Rather, the horse is a symptom of the weakness of the paternal function and the inability of the father to protect the boy from the outside world.[8] The horse shows up because the paternal function necessary for language acquisition cannot keep up with the boy's wants. We might say that the meaning or sense of his experience outstrips his ability to express it in words. Because the symbolic level of Hans's experience is inadequate to the affective level, he adopts hieroglyphic symbols into which many different affects are condensed. Following Jacques Lacan, Kristeva identifies language and the symbolic level of experience with the paternal function, while wants or needs are identified with the maternal function. We could say, then, that in phobia, the paternal function does not adequately counterbalance what



Kristeva calls the abject mother. In terms of animal phobias, Kristeva suggests that Little Hans is caught between maternal anguish and the inadequacy of paternal words.[9]

Wishes for Babies

The maternal function looms large behind Freud's paternal castration threat in each major case of animal phobia that grounds his metapsychology. In his interpretations of Little Hans, the Rat Man, and the Wolf Man, Freud finds in each case that the animal phobia is linked not only to fear of castration from the father or a desire to take the mother's place in copulation, but also more specifically to the wish to have children. If a child wants to take his mother's place in the sexual relation to his father, he also wants to take her place as a mother. In a sense, he wants to give birth to himself. In this regard, Freud's analysis suggests that these boys imagine doing away with their mothers (not—or in addition to—their fathers) and mothering themselves. They want babies from their fathers; and they appear to identify with babies from their fathers. These babies are abject offspring, which Kristeva reinterprets as jettisoned from an abject mother. Freud, on the other hand, returns the wish for a child back to the father and the boy's incestuous desire for him.

> In the case of the Wolf Man, Freud interprets an episode with an enema as follows:
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> The necessary condition of his re-birth was that he should have an enema administered to him by a man. (It was not until later on that he was driven by necessity to take this man's place himself.) This can only have meant that he had identified himself with his mother, that the man was acting as his father, and that the enema was repeating the act of copulation, as the fruit of which the excrement-baby (which was once again himself) would be born. The phantasy of re-birth was therefore bound up closely with the necessary condition of sexual satisfaction from a man. So that the translation now runs to this effect: only on the condition that he took the woman's place and substituted himself for his mother, and thus let himself be sexually satisfied by his father and bore him a child—only on that condition would his illness leave him. Here, therefore, the phantasy of re-birth was simply a mutilated and censored version of the homosexual wishful phantasy. (Freud 1918, 100)

Freud interprets the patient's fantasies about being back in the womb and identifying with his mother as about the father and the patient's homosexual desires for him. Notice that the mother assumes the passive posture of being



satisfied by the father and the boy imagines himself submitting to the father in the same way. Freud goes on to say that whether the neurotic's incestuous desires are directed at his mother or his father is correlated with whether the "subject's attitude is feminine or masculine" (Freud 1918, 102). Even what seems to be the boy's fantasy of giving birth to a child—to himself—is reinterpreted by Freud as passive, perhaps because the "act" of giving birth is feminine and therefore by nature passive. As the passage indicates, the Wolf Man has fantasies of having abject children or excrement babies.

In the case of the Rat Man, Freud discovers that one of the main reasons that his patient does not marry "his lady" is that she cannot have children, and he was "extraordinarily fond of children" (Freud 1909b, 216–17). The Rat Man also refers to psychoanalysis as "the child" that would solve his problems, but whom he also imagines kicking (Freud 1909b, 311, 313). In terms of Freud's theories of female sexuality, wherein most "female troubles" can be cured by having a child, the Rat Man could again be interpreted as preferring a feminine position. Freud discusses the Rat Man's attachment to children in the context of interpreting the rats as children. The rats of his obsessional fantasy are identified with himself as a biting child and the children that he wishes he could have. Here again, children (and the patient as a child) are identified with something dirty or disgusting. In the case of the Wolf Man, it was excrement, and in this case, it is dirty rats. The Rat Man also has a fantasy of shitting into other children's mouths and of copulating with an excrement penis (see Freud 1909b, 286, 287). Many of the Rat Man's fantasies and obsessions involve abjection—for example, one of his recurring obsessions and wishes is not to wash, which of course makes him more ratlike.



The desire for children is even more central to the case of Little Hans, who is "mummy" to his imaginary children until he is convinced that boys can't have babies and he becomes their father instead (e.g., Freud 1909a, 96). He insists that he will have a baby girl like his sister Hanna; but he doesn't want his mother to have any more babies and wishes his sister was dead (Freud 1909a, 87, 72). His father repeatedly tells him that babies are delivered by the stork. (It is noteworthy that Little Hans was most afraid of horses with carts, which his father called "stork boxes" and which Freud associated with Hans's mother's pregnant belly.) [10] And, at one point, Hans claims that he laid an egg and out of it came a little Hans, whereupon he asked his father, "Daddy, when does a chicken grow out of an egg? When it is left alone? Must it be eaten?" (Freud 1909a, 85). Little Hans imagines giving birth to himself by laying an egg; but he also seems worried that in order to give birth, one may have to eat the egg. He wants to have his mother to himself, but he also wants to be his own mother or mother to his own children. Like the Wolf Man and the Rat Man, Little Hans imagines shit babies, which leads Freud to suggest that there is a symbolic equivalence between shit-babies-penis (money, rats, etc.). It is



noteworthy that this equation is formative for his theory that having a child resolves penis envy in women. Discussing Hans, Freud concludes:

> The arrival of his sister brought into Hans's life many new elements, which from that time on gave him no rest . . . He rejected the proffered solution [to the question of where babies come from] of the stork having brought Hanna [his baby sister]. For he has noticed that months before the baby's birth his mother's body had grown big, that then she had gone to bed, and had groaned while the birth was taking place, and that when she got up she was thin again. He therefore inferred that Hanna had been inside his mother's body, and had then come out like a "lumf" [Han's word for turd]. He was able to imagine the act of giving birth as a pleasurable one by relating it to his own first feelings of pleasure in passing stool; and he was thus able to find a double motive for wishing to have children of his own: the pleasure of giving birth to them and the pleasure (the compensatory pleasure, as it were) of looking after them. (Freud 1909a, 133)

Freud comments that this wish to give birth to a baby/turd is not in itself what causes Hans's phobia; rather, Hans suspects that his father had something to do with conception, knows that his father comes between him and his mother (especially in terms of whether or not he gets to sleep in bed with her), and hates him for it. According to Freud, Hans's ambivalent feelings for his father, as we have seen, are displaced onto the horse—more precisely, the hatred is placed there so that the love can be reserved for his real father. But insofar as his fear of horses is triggered by the birth of his sister, and his fear seems mostly directed toward their "stork boxes" that deliver the dreaded sister, both mothers and sisters may be at least as important, if not more important, than the father in explaining Han's phobia.[11]



Shit Babies

Kristeva's theory of abjection sheds new light on Freud's cases of phobic boys' fantasies of excrement babies insofar as all imagine giving birth to themselves and taking the place of their mothers, even while this maternal position is associated with excrement, filth, and abjection. These phobic boys become members of what Kristeva calls the "erotic cult of the abject," which, approaching perversion, does not manage to "dodge" castration because the sense of wanting or longing is not yet identified with an object like that precious bodily member. Rather, the phobic lives by finding a symbol for all frustration, deprivation, and want—an abject symbol like rats gnawing at an anus—to stand in for, but still not represent, "his whole life" and the flows of his experience (Kristeva 1980, 55). It is as if abject bodily fluids associated with phobic fantasies are leaking out



of a hole in the psyche itself: "To preserve himself from severance, he is ready for more—flow, discharge, hemorrhage. . . . The erotization of abjection, and perhaps any abjection to the extent that it is already eroticized, is an attempt at stopping the hemorrhage . . ." (Kristeva 1980, 55). The fledgling subject's erotic life becomes tinged with abjection and represented by the hieroglyphic logic of phobia characterized by frightening yet fascinating animal symbols.

Kristeva reinterprets phobia as a form of abjection. The phobic "subject" incorporates a devouring, abject mother with whom he cannot quite identify and yet carries around as so much psychic baggage. This phobic subject's sense of self becomes constituted by abjection, such that he identifies with the abject rather than with the mother herself. In other words, the phobic identifies with the preobjectal maternal abject rather than with the mother as object. Through this incorporation of abjection, the phobic "subject" tries to give birth to his abject self, by shitting (or splitting) himself, among other forms of expulsion (cf. Kristeva 1980, 54). In a sense, the abject phobic is leaking himself from his various bodily orifices, much as he imagines he was leaked from parental orifices. He is especially fascinated with where babies come from, and as we have seen, this question is inspired by births of siblings, particularly sisters. The role of the father in this process seems suspect to the young phobic, for whom the paternal function is flimsy protection from the power of maternal abjection (cf. Kristeva 1980, 72).




For Kristeva, phobia and abjection are firmly anchored to the maternal body. In *Powers of Horror*, she describes maternal authority as earlier than, and a prerequisite for, paternal authority, particularly in terms of individual development, but also in an important sense in terms of social development. She identifies two main polluting or abject objects that fall from the body, which she argues are related to the maternal, the feminine, or both: excrement and menstrual blood. As we have seen, Freud's phobic boys all have a thing for excrement. Kristeva maintains that excrement represents danger from outside: "Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc.) stand for danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death." (Kristeva 1980, 71). She claims that the child imagines that the mother has an "anal penis," perhaps like the excrement penis imagined by the Rat Man; second, she claims that the mother and maternal authority become associated with sphincteral training, which is a frustration that follows upon maternal deprivation of the breast. Through these bodily frustrations, deprivations, and disciplinary actions, the maternal authority appears "chronologically and logically immediate" within early childhood experience (Kristeva 1980, 71). These unspoken regulations—not quite prohibitions—set up proper social (paternal) prohibitions. Through its first interactions with the body of the infant, the maternal body maps out the boundaries of the "clean and proper" self for the child.



Mother Phobia

For Kristeva, fear of animals is correlative to fear of maternity. In her reading, the totem animal or the phobic-animal are symbols of the fear of the maternal body. Behind what Freud identifies as fear of the father or fear of castration are more primal and abyssal fears connected to bodily animal drives in relation to the maternal body. As we will see, Kristeva diagnoses the cultural link between the maternal body and animality that gives maternity its "magical" and "fearsome" power (as Freud might say). On the level of the social, this power is the mother's generative power (Kristeva 1980, 77); on the level of the individual, this power is the mother's authority over the infant's body and its satisfaction. Both collectively and individually, we depend upon the maternal body (and animals and our own animality) for continued life; and this dependence is repressed through a process of abjection for the group or individual to assert its independence and fortify the boundaries of its identity. Kristeva interprets prohibitions against incest and contact with mothers or women, particularly during menses—a symbol of women's fertility and generative powers—as attempts to regulate their power, what she calls "a loathing of defilement as protection against the poorly controlled power of mothers" (Kristeva 1980, 77).




Kristeva discusses various rituals surrounding defilement, all of which, she says, revolve around the mother: "Defilement is the translinguistic spoor of the most archaic boundaries of the self's clean and proper body. In that sense, if it is a jettisoned object, it is so from the mother" (Kristeva 1980, 73). She argues that purification rituals use symbols and language to reach back to this archaic boundary associated with the mother (and the animal) to inscribe this abject pre-objectal "spoor" within a signifying system. She maintains that the inscription at stake here is one of "limits, an emphasis placed not on the (paternal) Law but on (maternal) Authority through the very signifying order" (Kristeva 1980, 73). In this regard, she describes these rituals as acts rather than symbols. Again, as with the phobic-animal, the inscription does not so much represent as stand in for the abject maternal body. The totem animal, insofar as it is involved in a ritual of purification of this type, is also a stand-in rather than a representation or symbol proper. Like the phobic-animal, it operates as a hieroglyph of sorts that condenses an amorphous group of experiences and fears into one location. Again, Kristeva emphasizes the unnamable out of reach of the paternal symbolic that motivates these rituals. In her account, unlike Freud's, they are not motivated by fear of the father and castration, but rather by fear of the mother and the loss of her body, or fear of the loss of the person's body itself. Insofar as all bodies become reminders of the abject maternal body, their animality must be repressed in favor of an abstract untouchable body, a sacred body excluded from the realm of flesh and blood. Whether it is fear of the mother or of the father, animals in the animal phobias are either representatives of, or stand-ins for, parental threats.



Following Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, and taking up anthropological literature, Kristeva maintains that in cultures where population growth is needed for survival, prohibitions against contact with the maternal body (namely, incest and cannibalism) are relaxed (Kristeva 1980, 78). These anthropological accounts lead her to ask:

> Is that parallel [between concerns for over-population and prohibitions] sufficient to suggest that defilement reveals, at the same time as an attempt to throttle matrilineality, an attempt at separating the speaking being from his body in order that the latter accede to the status of clean and proper body, that is to say, non-assimilable, uneatable, abject? (Kristeva 1980, 78).

She goes on to suggest that fear of the generative power of the mother not only makes her body abject and uneatable but also makes all bodies abject and uneatable. She says "I give up cannibalism because abjection (of the mother) leads me toward respect for the body of the other, my fellow man, my brother" (Kristeva 1980, 79; parentheses in the original). The body becomes inedible. It becomes abject. It becomes excrement, and we don't eat excrement. In this perverse economy, fantasies of maternal abjection and excrement babies protect the phobic boy from his fears that he too might be edible.

Sisters Biting Back

Through the birth of Little Hans's sister, we have moved from Freud's images of Kronos eating his babies and the phobic's fear of being eaten by his father to the phobic's fantasy of shitting babies and thereby taking the place of his mother and giving birth to himself (and to his sister). For Hans, his sister seems to be the ultimate little shit-baby. The Rat Man too has frequent associations between his sisters and excrement, rats, filth, lice, disease, etc. In association with his excrement-eating dream, mentioned earlier, he says to his sister Julie, "nothing about you would be disgusting to me" (Freud 1909b, 287). Yet it becomes clear in Freud's analysis that his patient's phobias and fantasies are as much connected to his two sisters as they are to his mother and father. The Rat Man seems caught between his incestuous desire for his younger sister, Julie, and his guilt over the death of his older sister, Katherine. And it is the Wolf Man's sadistic sister who torments him with frightening storybook pictures of wolves that send him into screaming fits. Discussing the Wolf Man, Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok suggest that in Russian, his mother tongue, the word for "six" (*Shiest*)—as in six wolves—is closely related to the word for "sister" (*Siestra*) (Abraham and Torok 1986, 17). They claim that the Wolf Man's wolf dream includes a "sixter" of wolves that indicates that his phobia is directly related to his sister, whom they maintain he has incorporated into his



own identity (Abraham and Torok 1986, especially 75). They suggest that what the Wolf Man witnesses as Freud's so-called "primal scene" is not intercourse between his parents, but rather incestuous relations between his father and his sister; this is the traumatic sight that causes his phobia (Abraham and Torok 1986, especially 76).[12] Like Hans and the Rat Man, the Wolf Man has fantasies of debasing his sister and usurping her dominant position; the incestuous scene is traumatic in part because he is left out of it—he is not the object of his father's desire. It is noteworthy that Freud does not consider that his Russian patient had seen and recounted seeing real wolves and not just storybook wolves, domestic sheepdogs, or his parents having sex "doggie style," as Freud concludes (see Genosko, 1993). In other words, while debating the status of the Wolf Man's witnessing the primal scene, Freud considers the reality of the sex act in humans behaving like animals, domesticated dogs and sheep, but he will not consider the reality of the wolf in the life of his patient, even though the patient saw wolves and wolf carcasses shot by his father (Genosko 1993, 613). Gary Genosko also points out that the patient had seen Anna Freud's dog while visiting Freud and that he remarked that the dog resembled a wolf; and the dog was named "Wulf," or Wolf (Genosko 1993, 611–12).




Returning to Freud's analysis of the Wolf Man's sister, we see that his patient's sexual development, fantasies, and phobias are directly linked with her. Freud describes how after their rivalry in early childhood—and his sister's seductions directed at her young brother—upon reaching puberty, the patient and his sister became "like the best of friends" (Freud 1918, 22). After the patient made a pass at his sister and she rejected him, Freud recounts how he subsequently seduced a house servant with the same name as his sister, and how all his love objects were substitutes for his beloved sister (Freud 1918, 22). He continued to choose servant girls, however, according to Freud, because he wanted to debase his sister at the same time. Immediately following his analysis of his patient's sister substitutes, Freud discusses the patient's reaction to his sister's death, which Freud says was surprising given how much he loved his sister and how little he grieved for her. Freud discovers, however, that the patient weeps at a poet's grave, a poet whom his father associated with the patient's sister. Freud concludes that the patient's grief is displaced because of his ambivalent relation to his sister, which is characterized by both unconscious incestuous love and jealousy. It is also noteworthy that in Freud's account, it is after the young patient's rejected sexual advances toward his "Nanya," or nanny, that he becomes cruel to animals. As Freud describes it, even his sexual curiosity about Nanya is piqued by his sister; and through them both, he "learns" about both castration and sexual desire. In addition to his concern with castration, which became associated with animals in fairy tales, he became occupied with where children came from, particularly in relation to a story in which children were taken out of the body of a (male) wolf (Freud 1918, 25).



Like Little Hans, the Wolf Man's phobias are linked to both a wish that males could have babies and to his sister. Like the Rat Man, his sexuality is shaped in relation to both his animal phobias and his desire for his sister(s) and their deaths. Freud diagnoses the Wolf Man's cruelty to animals as a result of his rejected sexual advances and his budding awareness of castration, which Freud concludes is linked to his regression and his "anal impulses" (Freud 1918, 26). These impulses lead him to "be cruel to small animals, to catch flies and pull off their wings, to crush beetles underfoot; in his imagination he liked beating large animals (horses) as well" (Freud 1918, 26). Although Freud's takeaway message about this case returns us to castration threats levied by the father against the son—threats that lead to ambivalence and the displacement of hatred onto animals, lurking behind these animal totems—we once again find a sadistic, seductive, and eventually dead sister.

And although these sisters repeatedly show up in his patient's dreams, fantasies, and stories, their central part in the familial drama drops out of Freud's conclusions about his animal phobics, which continues to revolve around the Oedipal family romance. Moreover, the role of the sister disrupts Freud's easy slippage between animal phobia and totemism, characteristic of both his work on animal phobias and his account of the origin of civilization in *Totem and Taboo*. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud structures the last part of that text in terms of the parallels between savages, neurotics, and children in terms of their relations to animals; he moves back and forth between them and likens animal phobias in children and neurotics to totemism in savages. In his discussions of animal phobias, he often refers to totemism and makes the same comparison. Although all Freud's phobics' animal fears are intimately linked to their sisters, sisters have no role in the story of the primal horde—the band of brothers—who kill the father and "marry" their mothers, thus fulfilling the Oedipal prophecy of psychoanalysis. Here, too, the kinship relations that interest Freud are those between brother, son, and father, determined by their struggles to possess women sexually, usually figured as mothers rather than sisters. Freud's interpretation of totemism shares with the fantasies of his phobics an implicit concern for paternity. By seeing all women in terms of motherhood and associating sexual desires for women by men to desires for their mothers, Freud repeats the phobics' concern with where babies come from. Women as mothers, as birth-givers and possessors of children, are desired by the brothers/sons to substitute themselves for the fathers; and as we have seen, not only this, but also to give birth to themselves. The death of the sister provides fuel for the phobic fantasy of taking her place as the one who can identify with the mother as birth-giver and possessor of children. Within Freud's descriptions of animal phobia, we might say that the sisters bite back and disrupt Freud's neat analyses of castration and Oedipal complexes.

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Notes

1. For a sustained analysis of Freud's use of animal phobias as evidence for his theories of the castration and Oedipal complexes, see my *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human* (Oliver 2009).
2. In her essay "The Bestiary and the Primal Scene," Elissa Marder develops a provocative and insightful interpretation of Freud's concern with the reality status of the primal scene witnessed by the Wolf Man. (Marder 2009). In his essay "Freud's Bestiary," Gary Genosko discusses the real wolves in the young Russian's life (Genosko 1993, 613).
3. Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks discusses the connection between food and sex in her reading of the Lacanian supplement to Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (Seshadri-Crooks 2003, 103–4).
4. In the context of discussing the link between maternity and death in Freud's writing, Elissa Marder made a similar point in a presentation at the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy conference in Chicago in 2007. Marder also discusses the link between the figure of mother in relation to the figure of animal in her "The Bestiary and the Primal Scene" (Marder 2009).
5. For a discussion of the relation between Kristeva and Klein, see Doane and Hodges (1992).
6. For discussions of Kristeva's reinterpretation of Freud's case of Little Hans, see DiCenso (1999, 69–70) and Beardsworth (2004, 84–90).
7. For an insightful analysis of Kristeva's reinterpretation of Freud's theory of phobia, particularly in the case of Little Hans, see Sara Beardsworth (2004, especially 84–90).
8. Marsha Garrison makes a similar argument in her reinterpretation of Little Hans's phobia (Garrison 1978, especially 525 and 527).
9. Marsha Garrison reinterprets Little Hans's phobia as a result of a fear of castration from his mother, not his father (Garrison 1978).
10. Marsha Garrison points out that Hans is especially afraid of horses with carts, which both he and Freud associate with a "stork box" or his mother's pregnant belly (Garrison 1978, 526).
11. Marsha Garrison rereads Freud's case of Little Hans and concludes that "Hans's death wish against Hanna is, then, the most plausible roots of this fear [of horses]" (Garrison 1978, 531).
12. In terms of Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, we could say that the Wolf Man's sister is his own abject self. See also Gary Genosko's discussion of the relation between wolves and sisters in the case of the Wolf Man (Genosko 1993, esp. 616).






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